

The Priory Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130981
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	293683
Inspection date	11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Noreen Buckingham

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Harris
Principal	Mrs Carol McDermott
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002
School address	Pontefract Road Crofton Wakefield West Yorkshire WF4 1LL
Telephone number	01924 303955
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Age group	11–14
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Priory Centre is a pupil referral unit which admits pupils aged between 11 and 14 years from the whole of Wakefield. Pupils have been permanently excluded from school and have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The centre also admits pupils on a short-term basis for six weeks on a 'Back on Track' initiative. This is for pupils who are at risk of exclusion and who return to mainstream school. Currently, the centre has 15 pupils on roll, of whom five have a statement of special educational need and another is undergoing assessment. A small minority have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are an additional ten pupils on the 'Back on Track' programme. All pupils are White British male and a very small number is in the care of the local authority. When they are admitted, many pupils have a history of poor school attendance. Currently, the overall management of the centre is the responsibility of the Principal of the Wakefield District Community School under a partnership agreement with the local authority and has been since 2005. The aim of the agreement is to offer greater flexibility to meet pupils' needs, share expertise of staff to develop high quality provision, enhance the capacity for improvement and strengthen safeguarding for vulnerable young people. The local authority is in discussion with the Department for Children, Schools and Families about this arrangement.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Priory Centre gives pupils a good education. This is because the leadership and management are good and the quality of teaching is also good so that pupils learn and make good progress. Key issues from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and the capacity to make further improvements is good. The principal, management committee and the head of centre have great determination to drive the centre forward. The good staff team work hard to ensure that pupils are well cared for in a safe environment.

Pupils' attainment on entry is lower than would be expected for their age, but this is due largely to disruptions in their education, which is a result of their particular difficulties and poor behaviour. However, once at the Priory Centre most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or in the care of the local authority, achieve well and improve their attitudes towards education. Pupils have opportunities to gain externally accredited awards, both academic and leisure-oriented giving them a good base for moving on. Pupils on the 'Back on Track' programme also achieve well and most return to mainstream school successfully. Teaching and learning are good and teachers plan lessons well making them as interesting as possible so that pupils are engaged in learning. All staff in the classrooms know pupils well and make positive relationships with pupils. The good subject knowledge teachers have means that they are confident and question pupils' understanding at regular intervals.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being reflect the good care, guidance and support they receive. Attendance is improving and is currently satisfactory. Considering how far some pupils have to travel on buses, this demonstrates how much they appreciate what the centre offers and how much they enjoy the wide range of activities they can access. Behaviour is good and pupils understand the rewards and sanctions system. Any misbehaviour is well managed. Celebrations of their behaviour and good work in assemblies make the pupils proud of what they achieve. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good, but their understanding of our socially and culturally diverse society is in comparison, underdeveloped. They are aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and make the most of the wide range of physical activities they can take part in. Work related activities both in and outside school are good preparation for the next stage in their lives. These are part of the outstanding curriculum the centre offers. The well structured timetable and wide range of subjects give pupils great opportunities to learn effectively. Pupils are offered numerous extra-curricular activities which they say they enjoy.

All safeguarding arrangements are securely established and staff work hard to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure in school. The school has harnessed well a very wide range of external agencies to support the pupils and their families and pupils have good in-school support on a daily basis. The school considers the reintegration of pupils very important and some pupils find this difficult. The school recognises that strengthening the partnership links with secondary schools will give pupils better chances for success. Daily contact is made with parents and the school recognises that involving them in the target setting process will benefit pupils' learning at home.

The management committee is very experienced and brings a wide range of varied expertise to support the centre. Their planned schedule of visits, alongside reports they receive from leaders about the centre's work, means that they are very well informed about the effectiveness

of the centre and what is needed for further improvement. The school demonstrates good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the links with secondary schools so that integration is made easier and is more successful.
- Give pupils more opportunities to learn about our socially and culturally diverse society, locally, nationally and globally.
- Give parents opportunities for involvement in setting their child's targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. They start from a below average base, usually because of the disruptions to their previous learning and the nature of their difficulties. However, good teaching, good care and support along with an outstanding curriculum mean that pupils have every opportunity to succeed. Once settled pupils work hard, show positive attitudes and make good progress. Staff have introduced a wide range of externally accredited courses, such as AQA Entry Level in English and science, OCR Entry Level in information and communication technology (ICT), adult literacy and numeracy certificates and a range of physical activity awards, such as Junior Sports Leader, Horse Management and in windsurfing and motor biking. Pupils' good progress on these courses is testament to way staff try to meet pupils' needs and interests and encourage a good work ethic as the norm. Pupils make good progress against the challenging individual academic and behaviour targets set, supplemented with whole-school targets focused on particular areas such as literacy.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal and social development and well-being because of the positive ethos across the centre and the good relationships with staff. Their attendance improves and they settle to work and this pays off in the good progress they make. However, the poor attendance of a small minority of pupils pulls down the overall attendance even though the centre does all it can to encourage attendance. Behaviour during the inspection was good and exclusions are becoming far less frequent. Pupils understand the rewards and sanctions system and are keen to show their points cards and explain the system to visitors. They are pleased when their work is recognised and praised in assemblies. Most pupils travel independently to the centre which shows how much they enjoy the activities they are offered. Healthy lifestyles are well promoted through personal, social and health education (PSHE) and opportunities for a range of physical activities. Pupils accept, for example, that any cigarettes are left at the school office at the start of the day. They show their good awareness of safety issues during lessons, for example, when, without reminding, they put on goggles and use Bunsen burners carefully. Work related activities are a strong feature of the curriculum which helps pupils' future prospects. Pupils have opportunities to engage in community projects and fundraising events but their understanding of our socially and culturally diverse society is not as strong.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning overall are good. Lessons are well planned and teachers ensure that pupils are aware of the lesson objectives. All staff work well together and have a good understanding of the difficulties some pupils have in managing their lives. Assessment of pupils' levels on entry to the centre gives teachers the information they need to set work at the right level. They know pupils well and the positive relationships they have with pupils help them to learn and make good progress. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use this well to ensure that lessons are interesting and activities motivate and engage pupils in learning. Generally, pupils stay on task and most have positive attitudes. Any disruptions are well managed with little interruption to the lesson. Teachers have a calm and patient approach which, when mixed with humour, means that everybody enjoys lessons. Some lessons give pupils opportunities to work together which promotes their personal development, although in other lessons, this aspect could be a little stronger. Teachers use praise and encouragement appropriately and give feedback about how well pupils have achieved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum offered to pupils is outstanding and is enriched by a wide and varied range of additional activities. Good emphasis on literacy and numeracy, as well as PSHE, impacts positively on pupils' personal development. The timetable is extremely well structured and similar to that of a mainstream secondary school: for example, pupils study physics, chemistry and biology as part of the science curriculum. There is also the opportunity to study more than one modern foreign language giving pupils exceptionally good learning opportunities. The curriculum for pupils on the 'Back on Track' programme is carefully organised and mirrors their mainstream experience as far as possible. The introduction of accredited courses for these Key Stage 3 pupils strengthens the curriculum further. Work related learning features strongly from Year 8 onwards and is helping to prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils at the centre are given a high standard of care, guidance and support. A very wide range of appropriate external agencies is available for support for both pupils and their families, as well as in-school support. Teaching assistants have trained and increased their skills, for example, as a learning mentor, student study support worker, or family support and behaviour support worker. Parents are contacted daily to talk about their child's behaviour and achievements and the school is planning to involve parents more in the target setting process, which is an area for improvement. All safeguarding arrangements are securely established. The centre tries very hard to remove the barriers that are preventing pupils from learning. Tracking pupils' progress is good and any identified issues are scrutinised and appropriate action taken. The reintegration of pupils is partly successful and the centre recognises that strengthening the partnership between schools and the centre, would improve this process. However, 'Back on Track' pupils return to school with support from the centre and this is generally successful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the Priory Centre are good. The principal of Wakefield District Community School provides effective strategic leadership which is supported well by good day-to-day management by the head of centre. There is a strong, committed team who support each other and who share the vision of supporting pupils so that the quality of their lives is improved and their future can be brighter. Everyone is clear what is working well and what else needs to be done. Staff are committed to ensuring that pupils have equality of opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the centre's provision and to achieve well. The work of the centre is monitored and its effectiveness evaluated regularly. As a result, the role of the 'learning leaders' is emerging as an important influence on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Members of the management committee give very good support and their varied expertise and wealth of professional experience give a high level of challenge. There is a planned schedule of visits so that members see for themselves how the centre works. The centre has undertaken an audit about the promotion of community cohesion across the centre and knows that more needs to be done to ensure pupils understand our socially and culturally diverse society.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of The Priory Centre, Wakefield, WF4 1LL

Thank you for making me welcome when I visited your centre recently. I know some of you were away playing in a football tournament and I hear you played well. Also I did enjoy my banana muffin which I saw being made. The centre gives you a good education and you have plenty of opportunities to take part in or experience a range of exciting activities. I think the curriculum is excellent and is a result of the hard work of staff who want you to succeed. Teaching is good and you learn well and make good progress. I was pleased to see that most of you work hard in lessons. Staff ensure you are safe and you have access to a wide range of people to help you should you need it. Your head runs the centre very well and all staff support her.

Many of you return to mainstream school successfully, and to make this easier I have suggested that the centre works more closely with secondary schools to see how they can help. I have also asked that you have opportunities to learn about other cultures and societies so that you have a better understanding of the world around you. Finally I have suggested that your parents/carers are more involved in helping to set your targets so that they can help you at home.

I hope the centre goes from strength to strength and you can do your bit by continuing to behave well and work hard.